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Foreward

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FOREWARD

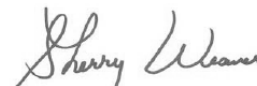
Ten years ago, as the Washington College of Law prepared for its centennial, Professor Angela Davis and I were among a small group who met with Dean Grossman to discuss how, within the context of the celebration, to rectify the absence of African Americans in the founding and early history of the law school. He listened. Then he asked what we would like to do.

Ultimately, we all agreed to hold a day-long conference during which we would gather lawyers, legal scholars, judges, journalists, and students to examine the state of the relationship between the African-American community and the justice system. And that is what we did: a committed group of faculty and staff members organized into a planning committee and “brought forth” the African Americans and the Law Conference. To our collective surprise and delight, people came to see and participate in a great day of discussion, reflection, and celebration. Thus, when the Centennial Celebration morphed into the annual Founders Celebration, our conference came along.

Judge Sylvania Woods played a key role in that first conference as one of a group of judges who talked with us that afternoon about their individual journeys to the bench and how each had triumphed over moments of racism and other obstacles. Each narrative was compelling, but we remember Judge Woods for his common sense and humor, qualities that had been his mainstays along the way. Later that summer, we learned that he had passed away, and we decided to dedicate the conference to the memory of a man, a jurist, and an alumnus who had lived an honorable life.

So for the last nine years, the Sylvania Woods Conference on African Americans and the Law has occurred each spring as the result of the collaborative process that began that very first year. The Planning Committee—many of whom are valued original members—puts together a program of experts who enlighten our audiences on topics from legal education, to criminal law, to politics, their nexus with the law, and the ultimate impact on the African-American community. We pay tribute to the accomplishments of those who have excelled all along the continuum from law school to practice. And we celebrate our having taken our place in the progressive institution that is the Washington College of Law. I am honored to have worked with Dean Grossman, the members of the fabulous Planning Committee, the African-American alumni, the very gracious Woods family, and everyone else who has made a resounding success of the Woods Conference as we observe its tenth anniversary.

Finally, I thank *The Modern American* for dedicating time, ink, and space to a special issue focusing on the Woods Conference. That this conference and this publication have met in this way and time says much for the success of the achievement of diversity as a concept in this law school community.



Sherry Weaver, Chair
Woods Conference Planning Committee

The Modern American is the Washington College of Law's (WCL) non-partisan, student-run publication dedicated to cutting-edge issues in diversity and the law. *The Modern American* promotes a provocative, fresh dialogue analyzing America's legal and social systems' treatment of racial, ethnic, sexual, and other underrepresented peoples from a wide range of political and social viewpoints.

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